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## *Our Little Secrets*

### LISA FITTKO: SHE ESCORTED WALTER BENJAMIN ACROSS THE PYRENEES

**BY LAWRENCE REICHARD**

Hitler's rampage across Europe produced millions of heroes, but few like Lisa Fittko, who at the age of 96 died March 12, 2005, in her adopted home of Chicago. I had the great honor of knowing Lisa, who happened to live next door to my father in the final decades of her life.

Through my parents I have had the privilege of knowing several extraordinary people who fled Europe one step ahead of Hitler's stormtroopers and SS: a mathematician, winner of the Abel Prize, who fled Budapest; a woman who, on foot, chased for several miles the vehicle full of Nazis that had come for her husband. Somehow my friend talked the Nazis into releasing her husband, and the couple soon thereafter fled their Viennese home for a life of teaching in the U.S.

But none of these people compares with Lisa Fittko who, in the fight against fascism, put her life on the line time and time again, most notably by smuggling Jews and intellectuals across the Pyrenees from Nazi-occupied Vichy France to safety in, of all places, Franco's Spain.

Lisa was truly larger than life. Go to http://www.lrz-muenchen.de/~catherine.stodolsky/lisa/lisa.html and check out her swaggering 1930s photo, resplendent with debonaire scarf and cigarette. You couldn't write a better life's script, not even if you wrote Casablanca, which in some ways bears a striking resemblance to the script of

(**OLS** *continued on page 2)*

## *Questions Labor's Leaders Daren't Ask*

# Where and Why Did We Go Wrong?

**BY JOANN WYPIJEWSKI**

It's striking how much difference a few years can make. Five or so years ago, I was giving talks on the future of labor, and if we were gathered on a college campus, the hall was full of students. On February 28 2005, I was speaking at UCLA with Nelson Lichtenstein. The subject was "The Decline of Labor", and among the faculty and older white labor guys, who made up most of the audience, only two students were apparent.

Maybe students don't like talk of decline and, with youth's optimism, are as inspirited as their older brothers and sisters were about the great contest between labor and capital and the prospects for collective action through unions. I doubt it, though.

The next day, the AFL-CIO Executive Council would begin its three-day winter meeting in Las Vegas and, as I previewed it for the California audience, the most animating subject would be a tax cut. Afterward someone, probably SEIU's Andy Stern, would call it progress.

I was right, but I can't begin to match these guys in cynicism. The "great debate" as it's sometimes billed – taste of what's to come at the federation's fiftieth anniversary convention in July? – turned out to be a fight over how much money the affiliate unions might be able to extract from the federation. The Teamsters, suddenly in the front ranks of reformers, proposed a 50 per cent rebate on the per capita dues that national unions pay to be affiliated with the federation; the money to be reinvested in those unions' own organizing programs (in theory) and available only to those unions (by Hoffa's formula, large unions) that have a proven commitment to organizing.

John Sweeney proposed 17 per cent. The reformers snorted, but the big news of the day was that these same reformers were joined by two new unions, the United Food & Commercial Workers and the United Auto Workers. The next morning on his blog, Stern said he'd seen the rosy-fingered "dawn of a new day" for change.

There's no concealing it anymore: this is a wall-to-wall farce, and anyone who wants to call it progressive or new or bold, possibly radical, is deluded. For two years the talk has been all about restructuring, density, democracy (or its irrelevance), but always as if these were serious proposals, serious grapplings with labor's fundamental crisis. They are nothing of the kind, and the disingenuous money-wrangle and quick make-up job on the UFCW and UAW with the pancake of reform, seal it.

It's not that those two unions are so much worse than all other unions, but having both just recently settled major contracts benefiting older workers at the gross expense of the young – guaranteeing that a new generation will despise unions and regard their invocations to solidarity as so much sounding brass – they symbolize everything that the spirit of progress should abhor.

What is the crisis? It's what is not being talked about. Loss of density, loss of members, and even assaults on democracy are merely symptoms. To fol-

(**Labor** *continued on page 5)*

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(**OLS** *continued from page 1*)

Lisa's life.

According to an excellent biography by Catherine Stodolsky of the Ludwig Maximilians Universitat in Munich, Lisa "was born in 1909 as Elizabeth Ekstein in Uzhgorod, a small town on the eastern border of the Austrian-Hungarian monarchy that became part of the Soviet Union after World War II and is today part of the Ukraine." When Lisa was still quite young her family, which Stodolsky describes as "German-speaking middle class intellectuals from Bohemia," moved to Vienna.

I spoke with Lisa several times about her younger days in Vienna, and she remembered them fondly. It was perhaps here, at a very young age, that Lisa's profound political commitment began to take form. In Vienna, during and after World War I, Lisa's father published an anti-war literary magazine.

In 1922, the family moved to Berlin, and in the late 1920s and 1930s, as Hitler rose to power, Lisa was active in leftist youth groups and took to demonstrations and street fighting, not an unusual avocation for anti-fascist youth in those days.

When Hitler completed his rise to power, Lisa's parents fled the country, but Lisa held on. Around 1933 the heat became too great for Lisa as well, and she moved across the border into Czechoslovakia. Here she met her future husband Hans Fittko, who had been organizing resistance on the German border. And here Lisa also hung out and apparently partied heartily with such exiled luminaries as the great Dada anti-fascist photographer and graphic designer, John Heartfield.

The heat became too great in Prague as well, and the couple moved on to Basel, Switzerland, on the French and German borders, and from there they smuggled literature into Germany.

But the supposedly neutral Swiss government decided to honor a German warrant for Hans' arrest, and the couple was forced to flee, this time to Holland. Not missing a step, Lisa and Hans continued their cross border agitation from their new home among the canals and tulips. Not surprisingly, trouble followed them here as well. When cohorts were arrested on the German side of the border, Lisa and Hans went to Paris. There, Lisa took to writing scripts for cross border, anti-fascist radio broadcasts.

When the war broke out in earnest, all German and Austrian refugees in France were ordered interned in camps. This order had the result of thrusting Lisa Fittko into the greatest role of her life, that of smuggler of people over the Pyrenees from France into Spain, where Franco, like Mussolini, was athwart Nazi policies on the slaughter of Jews.

By sheer chance, Lisa was interned in Gurs (Hans was sent to Vernuche), in the French foothills of the Pyrenees. Lisa timed her visit to Gurs well. The camp was originally built to accommodate Republican refugees from Franco's murderous subversion of Spanish democracy, and it later became yet another of Hitler's death camps. For harrowing photos of Hitler's Gurs, go to http://gurs.free.fr/.

From Gurs, Lisa escaped the clutches of her internment camp, and then began her career as refugee smuggler.

Like any mountainous border region, the Pyrenees had its centuries-old smugglers' paths. According to Stodolsky, the trail used by Lisa had been used by Republican General Lister in his retreat from Franco's advancing troops, and was laid out for her by the socialist mayor of the border hamlet of Banyuls sur Mer.

Lisa's first charge was none other than the great Austrian philosopher and literary critic, Walter Benjamin. One small step ahead of the Gestapo, Benjamin knocked on Lisa Fittko's door. Stodolsky quotes Lisa's recollection of the experience. "Gracious madam," Benjamin said. "Please forgive the intrusion - I hope this is not an inopportune time. Your honored spouse explained to me how I could find you. He said 'she will take you over the border to Spain.'"

Fittko: "The world is falling to pieces, I thought, but Benjamin's courtesy is unshakable."

Lisa later recounted how Benjamin, "the old man" at 48, had to stop for one minute every ten minutes to make it over the mountains. The key, the sage said, was to not reach the point of exhaustion. All the way over the mountains Benjamin clung to a black leather briefcase, refusing to part company with it, despite what was for him a difficult and treacherous climb. "It looked heavy and I offered to help him carry it", Fittko recalled in the memoir she wrote in 1980 in English, finally published in Benjamin's *Gesammelte Schriften*, Vol 5, 1982. "'This is my new manuscript,' he explained… You must understand, this briefcase is the most important thing to me. I cannot risk losing it. It is the manuscript that must be saved. It is more important than I am.'"

Lisa got Benjamin successfully over the mountains and into Port-Bou. But a week later she heard that Benjamin had taken his life (with an overdose of morphine) the day after he arrived. At the Port Bou border Spanish guards told Lisa's band of refugees that regulations had changed, and fearing he would be sent back to Hitler's clutches, Benjamin committed suicide. The experience of refugees who came later indicates that a few dollars, a few cigarettes or just a little pleading might have got Benjamin across the border and saved his life.

The precious manuscript? In 1980 Fittko got a call from Gershom Scholem, a trustee of Benjamin's literary estate and his closest friend. He'd just heard via Chimen Abramsky, of Fittko's recollection. "He asked," Fittko remembered, "for every detail concerning the manuscript. 'There is no manuscript', he said. 'Until now, nobody knew such a manuscript existed.'"

According to Stodolsky, Lisa Fittko was recruited to smuggle refugees in a Marseilles cafe by Albert Hirschmann, a member of the Emergency Rescue Committee and a confederate of the better-known Varian Fry. On meeting Lisa Fittko and proposing the smuggling idea to her,

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Editors
Alexander Cockburn
Jeffrey St. Clair

Business
Becky Grant

Design
Deborah Thomas

Counselor
Ben Sonnenberg

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**PO Box 228**
**Petrolia, CA 95558**
**1-800-840-3683 (phone)**
**counterpunch@counterpunch.org**
**www.counterpunch.org**

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# Oil's Victory in Alaska, with a Dem Assist

## By Jeffrey St. Clair

For the past quarter century, there's been an annual ritual on Capital Hill. Each spring, with the regularity of migrating warblers, the oil lobby bursts into the halls of congress with a scheme to open for drilling the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, perched on the northern rim of Alaska on the ice-bound Beaufort Sea. This seasonal onslaught prompts the big eco groups to frenzied action, unleashing a blizzard of emergency fundraising appeals adorned with shots of caribou and polar bears, pleading with their members to send money immediately in order to "save the refuge". Year after year, the face off has ended in a stalemate, with the politicians pocketing cash from both sides.

Now this dance is over. With a 51-49 pro-drilling vote on a deviously-crafted line item in the U.S. Senate's budget bill, the oil industry has seized its most prized trophy: access to reservoirs of crude beneath the 1.5 million-acre wildlife refuge on the Arctic plain.

ANWR used to be an icon of the power of the environmental movement. Now it stands as a symbol of its impotence. With ANWR, the most sacrosanct stretch of land in North America, now pried open to the drillers, everywhere else, from the Rocky Mountain Front to the coasts of Florida, Oregon and California, is fair game.

It didn't come easy and in the end it took a feat of procedural prestidigitation and the participation of a few well-placed Democrats to seal ANWR's fate.

Over the last decade, as the Republicans' grip on Congress has tightened, the fate of ANWR has depended on the judicious invocation of the filibuster by anti-drilling forces in the senate. Even as the drilling block gained a majority, they were never able to muster the 60 votes needed for cloture, and the measure was repeatedly abandoned in the doldrums of limitless senate debate.

In the past, ANWR measures have originated in the appropriations and energy committees. But this time, the drilling scheme was secreted inside the rules for the 2006 congressional budget resolution, which protected the proposal from blockage by a filibuster.

This bit of legislative trickery was devised by Senator Ted Stevens. On the eve of the senate vote, Stevens told his hometown paper, the *Anchorage Daily News*, that he had been suffering from "clinical depression" for the past three years over his inability to nail ANWR.

***Bush emphasized the role Alaska oil would play in boosting domestic supplies. But no one is really sure if there's much oil under the tundra at all.***

"I'm really depressed, as a matter of fact, I'm seriously — I'm seriously depressed," Stevens told the *News*. "Unfortunately, clinically depressed. I've been told that, because I've just been at this too long, 24 years arguing to get Congress to keep its word. I'm really getting to the point where I'm taking on people even in my own party that do things that I don't think is fair. You get to that point where you're challenging your colleagues — that's not exactly good. I really am very, very disturbed."

You can see why Stevens got a little sweaty. As the crucial vote neared, he witnessed the defection of seven Republican senators: John McCain, Gordon Smith, Olympia Snowe, Susan Collins, Lincoln Chafee, Mike DeWine and Norm Coleman.

The architect of Alaskan statehood and chief facilitator of the transfer of the state's public resources to corporations bristled at critiques from some in his own party that he had used sleazy tactics to secure victory. "The only reason we're doing it [in the budget] is they filibustered for 24 years," Stevens, dressed for battle in his "Incredible Hulk" tie, shouted on the floor of the senate, pounding his fist on the podium. "Twenty-four years!"

If there's any good news to come out of this, it's that Stevens, one of the most flagrantly corrupt members of congress, vows he'll retire once ANWR is opened. Of course, with at least a decade's worth of lawsuits in the works, he'll be mouldering in his grave long before a gallon of ANWR crude ever sluices down the pipeline to Valdez.

The razor-thin victory in the senate hinged on the votes of three key Democrats: the Hawai'ians Daniel Inouye and Daniel Akaka and Mary Landrieu from the Cajun oil patch.

The Alaska and Hawaii delegations cruise through the congress like synchronized swimmers, voting harmoniously when it comes to matters involving the wishes of either state. They entered the union together, and they will leave it in ruins together. Inouye calls Stevens his "brother". Akaka, who fashions himself as the senate's most vocal defender of native rights, said piously he was "saddened" that his vote trampled the concerns of the G'wichin tribe, who live near the refuge and are subsistence hunters of the Porcupine caribou herd, which is threatened by drilling.

When it comes to oil policy, Louisiana can be counted on to make it a threesome. So it was no surprise to see Democrat Mary Landrieu offer her vote to the oil cartel. She was simply following the path blazed years before by her Democratic Party predecessors Bennett Johnston and John Breaux.

Much of the blame for the loss of ANWR must fall at the feet of Bill Clinton, Bruce Babbitt, and the claque of environmentalists who winked at the Clinton administration's incursions into the Arctic for eight years. When Clinton opened to drilling the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska, only 90 miles to the west of ANWR and a landscape of almost identical ecological features, Babbitt vowed that the oil could be extracted without leaving anything more than a toeprint on the tundra. Bush and Stevens used almost identical language

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to describe their plans for ANWR. So the Clintonoids set the precedent for "environmentally-benign" oil drilling in fragile ecosystems; they opened the gates to drilling ANWR.

In pushing for ANWR drilling, Bush emphasized the role Alaska oil would play in boosting domestic supplies. But no one is really sure if there's much oil under the tundra at all, and even the rosiest scenarios proffered by the oil lobby suggest a big strike would only sate the nation's oil thirst for something in the order of six months.

Another villain in this saga has been the Teamsters Union, under the leadership of James Hoffa Jr. Hoffa has worked hand-in-hand with the union-busting Ted Stevens on ANWR drilling measures over the past five years. Hoffa hailed Stevens' arm-twisting tactics and praised the vote as a victory for the union. "For the Teamsters, the primary motive for our support of this effort has been constant and singular — job creation," Hoffa gloated. "The Teamsters will continue to fight to open ANWR until we have succeeded. We look forward to putting this prolonged national debate behind us and getting to work at developing the resources of ANWR."

Hoffa likes to spout off about his political power, but he should know better than to boast that ANWR drilling will generate many U.S. jobs. There's not the slightest assurance that ANWR crude will ever end up inside an American refinery, car or power plant. That's because in 1994 Bill Clinton, in concert with Alaska delegation, overturned a 30-year old ban on the export of Alaskan crude. That ANWR oil is just as likely to end up in South Korea or China as the refineries of Long Beach. Indeed, ARCO, one of the big players in the Arctic, owns a new refinery in Shanghai, which is one of the world's largest.

The losing bid to keep the drillers out of ANWR was led by two Democrats who have yet to relinquish designs on the White House: John Kerry and Joe Lieberman. This humiliating defeat should send them both packing through the exit along with Ted Stevens. But they will cling on, deploying the same worn tactics that led to the corporate routs on the bankruptcy and class action lawsuit bills.

At this rate, only the Republicans will be able to save Social Security… or anything else. CP

# CounterPunch Notebook

## By Alexander Cockburn

George Kennan departed this life at the age of 101, amid respectful eulogies in the press. In his advanced years, his prime rostrum was the *New York Review*, where he advocated policies of genteel internationalism and détente markedly different from his ferocious cold war postures of earlier years, so crucial in setting the terms of the Cold War in the years following World War II.

In fact, Kennan's self-rehab was one of the wonders of the late twentieth century. Not conspicuous in his memoirs were such important aspects of his service to the state as his salvaging of Nazi war criminals for use by the U.S. in its postwar engagements, or such documents as his wartime memo apropos de-Nazification. Chris Simpson quoted it in his book *Blowback*: "Whether we like it or not, nine-tenths of what is strong, able and respected in Germany has been poured into those very categories which we have in mind" for purging from the German government – namely, those who have been "more than nominal members of the Nazi Party." Rather than remove "the present ruling class of Germany", as he put it, it would be better to "hold it [that class] strictly to its class and teach it the lessons we wish it to learn."

## Nader on Terri Schiavo

We congratulated Ralph Nader for his excellent performances on Crossfire, where he spiritedly identified himself as being Ralph Nader, "from the *progressive* left", after tying Robert Novak in knots. Nader was eager – who isn't? – to talk about the Schiavo case.

"When the relevant state law appoints the spouse as guardian *ad litum* [for the duration] there should be no conflicts of interest involved." Of course Michael Schiavo does have such a conflict of interest, in that he stands to inherit a $350,000 portion of the successful medical malpractice suits launched in Terri Schiavo's name. "Her parents want to take care of Terri. There is no state interest in letting her die. As far as the 'persistent vegetative state' is concerned, Terri is not on life support, heart pump or ventilator. If her biological family wants to take care of her, why should Michael retain the power to pull the feeding tube from his spouse? He's gone through hell for 15 years, and for the last ten years he has been living with another woman who has brought him two children. So it seems to me that the equity of the situation is to have Michael withdraw as guardian and let Terri's parents be guardians and take care of her. That's the crux. When a spouse is in effect married to two women(after five years the second woman is his common law wife), he should withdraw and let her parents take of their child.

"It all comes down to that core point. As far as I'm concerned, there's no legitimate state interest. Why is it assumed that her spouse has the right to pull the plug?

"Disability rights groups don't want Terri's feeding tube withheld, in part because there are enough examples of medical science advancing. In the 1980s these tube removals were frequently done with children with Down syndrome. Where it comes to a 'permanent vegetative state', doctors can be wrong; they all follow the leader."

Nader faults the Republicans. "They should have pushed for legislation to allow removal from state to federal courts, as with criminal law *habeas corpus* suits. Instead they wrote this specific bill and somehow left out the kind of certainty they wanted. They should have let her parents have the right to have standing to file in federal court and above all to have a *de novo* review of the case. By leaving that out they insured what the federal district court judge did on March 22, which was to decline to hear the case.

"Here you have Republicans pouring out speeches on the Hill expressing deep compassion for human life and yet these same speechmakers are mostly savage opponents of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Highway Safety Administration, the Food and Drug Administration, and of regulations designed to reduce the hundreds of thousands of Americans who are killed, injured or sickened through medical malpractice, occupational disease and traumas, air pollution and raw poverty. I can caustically comment that just perhaps some of these cold-hearted Reps, having gone through their Terri Schiavo epiphany, will expand their newly discovered compassion for adult human life by forcefully expanding the meager enforcement authority and budgets of these federal life-saving agencies." CP

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***What if the union doesn't make a difference? What if you can't affect anything that happens in it? What if the local president makes a fortune while you pay his way at a poverty wage? What if you speak your mind at meetings and get black-balled?***

(**Labor** *continued from page 1)*

low the metaphor, wanting to relieve the symptoms is natural, but doing so without naming the disease is dishonest. The epidemiology of the crisis is traced in a hundred labor history books, but the long and short of it is that for thirty years there has been an all-out, coordinated economic and political attack on labor from capital; and yet the mass of the working class doesn't trust unions – can't even look to unions – for help.

The attack is not just a matter of wages, but wages etch the story in people's pockets. From 1890 to 1970, even with Depression and recessions, wages rose on average between 1.2 and 2 per cent a year. From 1970 to now, they have been flat or in the negative column in real terms.

Over this same period, unions have conceded, have crushed internal dissent (as the UFCW did with P9 and the UAW with black workers and with New Directions), have pitted shop against shop, region against region, generation against generation in two-tier contracts of which the UFCW's with the Northern California grocery chains and the UAW's with Caterpillar are just the latest cruel examples. And they long ago abandoned the ideological field, leaving the collective needs of their members and of the mass of people on the losing end without a clear and sustained voice of objection, of resistance, of social and political courage.

Might a great debate about labor's future instigated by the self-described progressive side at least address this? No one has a glowing record, not the SEIU, not some of its allies who preen about as model unions but have yet to disengage fully from corruption or Mob influence, and certainly not the AFL-CIO. But there is no self-criticism, only curdled talk of rebates and structures, of who's on top this week and who we might stick it to the next. Hypocrisy and opportunism mount with the day. Reformers congratulate themselves, and string-pullers at AFL HQ busily devise allurements to keep affiliates in line. Now, that a passion for reform can be demonstrated by nothing more than a union's position on an institutional tax cut, money is the arbiter, and the federation has plenty of that to shift around.

Meanwhile, what is the character of our time? Unless they have active churches, the people are alienated from any sense of a commons. Human solidarity, the notion of a social contract, are either the butt of jokes or anachronisms from the highest platforms in the land. The soul is heavy with war and horror, but the culture responds with accommodation.

Competition, the nation's dogma, is also the main subject of its distractions, and that's not including sports. Collective happiness? What is that?

In such a time Andy Stern quips that the rest of labor is like US Air, bankrupt and heavy, and SEIU like the fleet-footed, price-cutting Southwest. Yes, he was invoking the non-union Southwest. Who'd you rather fly with? His lieutenants advocate "force" and "threats" and "start[ing] some fights with other unions". This is the progressive option?

Stern's adversaries, as a group, have no more inclination toward any unity that matters, especially class unity. Unions pay lip service to the crisis in health care affecting Americans, but the health benefit as part of a prospective collective bargaining agreement, assuming it can be maintained, is one of unionism's best selling points so there's been no serious, concerted work on this with other social forces since 1992.

The AFL's principled decision to make the Social Security debate its top priority is criticized by some within its own headquarters and within some affiliates.

Its work with international labor bodies on globalization, certainly weak, is countered on the reformers' side with ideas to form a parallel international bureaucracy.

On Iraq, Sweeney opposes the war personally, but the federation stands mute, and it's unclear what the resolutions in opposition by individual unions can amount to when so many are so remote from their own members.

The point is not that institutional labor must be all things to all people or that, as in some left dreams; it should be "leading the social movements". The point is that any debate about labor's future is worthless if it doesn't consider what institutional labor is to its own members, what it is to workers who aren't organized and will never be organized, and what standard it might raise, what pole of opposition or unity it might present in a society pillaged by capital and you're-on-your-own-buddy individualism.

Union workers have always been in the minority, and given that 75 per cent of Americans are employed by small business or self-employed, even under


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(**Labor** *continued from page 5)*

the best circumstances unions always will be in the minority. But the class, which includes many of those "independent contractors" and which ought to be reconceptualized from worn 1930s caricatures, shares the same large needs and the same large enemy. A minority institution of workers cannot but lose if it doesn't use its institutional stature to speak also for the mass of workers who have no megaphone.

This is not to gloss over contradictions among workers, but as Lichtenstein, speaking of history, said at UCLA, union movements do better when they talk about something that society as a whole, or in large part, thinks is important.

What was important in the sixties? Civil rights and Vietnam. By and large the unions failed on both and have continued on their insular path, losing members, losing relevance.

What is important now? Insecurity, inequality, the loss of the commons, war.

Union leaders take comfort in poll numbers showing over and over that, when asked, most people say they'd like a union if they could have one.

Stern uses the polls to validate arguments about organizing and restructuring. Sweeney uses them to validate arguments about politics, reviving Democratic Party fortunes and winning right-to-organize legislation. Both of them need to get around more, to where people won't flatter them.

Those polls never ask: What if the union doesn't make a difference? What if you can't affect anything that happens in it? What if the local president makes a fortune while you pay his way at a poverty wage? What if you speak your mind at meetings and get blackballed? What if the union negotiated away your rights and pay raises before you were ever a member in a two- or three-tier contract and is doing the same for future workers now? What if the company moves your job away (as Wal-Mart just did after Quebec workers organized)?

And what does it take to organize workers whom the economy, the political culture, the work itself has already organized for alienation?

Every labor story I have ever covered has never been just a fight between the workers and the boss, or the workers and the law, huge as that always is. Every time there's also a fight within the union, and almost every time a fight within the larger community between the union workers and the rest of the class. "Now they'll know what it's like", people on the outside will say as the union goes down.

There's a question of internal culture and consciousness, a question of social conscience and ideological backbone that's mostly missing from this debate. Until those are honestly addressed, reform looks like an old-fashioned ego game.

And right now it has the smell of the end of something, not the beginning. CP

(**OLS** *continued from page 2)*

the American Fry mistook Fittko's momentary hesitation for a desire for remuneration. "How much?" Fry asked.

"What does he mean?" Hans Fittko asked Hirschmann. "Do you know that assisting men of military age in illegal border crossings now rates the death penalty? And you offer us money... Do you know what an anti-fascist is?" Indeed. Hans Fittko knew what an anti-fascist was.

Lisa continued to smuggle refugees across the Pyrenees until 1941, when the Germans banned all foreigners from the border area and things got too dangerous. Lisa and Hans Fittko moved on to Cuba, then a way station for many European refugees waiting for U.S. visas. They arrived there ten days before Pearl Harbor. The Fittkos lived in Cuba for eight years before moving to Chicago.

Lisa Fittko's graciousness was no different from that of Walter Benjamin when she first met him. I visited Lisa every time I visited my father next door, and every time I visited her, this great woman insisted on talking as much about me as about her. The same is true of my mathematician friend who fled Hitler.

The world is slowly losing a whole generation of fantastic heroes blessed not only with courage but with amazing grace.

But don't worry, as I'm sure Lisa Fittko would have said, the heroes of the fight against the Vietnam War are perfectly capable of filling their shoes. CP

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